

10281

TWO SERMONS
PREACHED

At the ASSIZES held at HUNTINGDON,

ON

SUNDAY March 11, and *SUNDAY* July 22, 1798.



AT THE ASSIZE,

HELD

At HUNTINGDON,

BEFORE

SIR WM. HENRY ASHHURST,

One of His Majesty's Justices of the Court of King's Bench,

MARCH 11, 1798,

THIS SERMON

WAS PREACHED,

By GEORGE LAUGHTON, D.D. *u*

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE PEACE, AND VICAR OF
CHIPPENHAM, CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

Cambridge,

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1798.

THE ASSIZE

HELD

AT BUNTINGFORD

BEFORE

THE HON. HENRY R. JENKINS

OF THE BENCH OF JUSTICE



THE

OF THE

BY GEORGE JACOBSON D.D.

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CHURCHMAN, CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge

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TO
JOHN THARP, Esq.
HIGH SHERIFF
OF THE COUNTIES OF
CAMBRIDGE AND HUNTINGDON,

THESE SERMONS,

As a small, but sincere

Tribute of Respect,

Are Inscribed,

By his very faithful and obedient Servant,

GEORGE LAUGHTON.



Jeremiab X.—23.

THE WAY OF MAN IS NOT IN HIMSELF: IT IS NOT
IN MAN THAT WALKETH TO DIRECT HIS STEPS.



OF the various attempts that have been made to delineate the human character, and its native qualities, some have confined its endowments to mere animal sensibility, and reduced all its powers to animated terrestrial matter, without social propensities, or the power of exercising that sentimental faculty, which the mechanism of the body is so admirably formed to express. Others have added to these humiliating principles the passions exercised with violence and brutality, a predominate selfishness that incites the most furious rage, in defence of the smallest gratifications, and so strange an abhorrence of those of the same species, that accidental interference, certainly produced resentment and endeavours to destroy their being.

Ideas these very erroneous and unjust :—Investigating the natural
world,

world, men have built on the basis of experience and insist that the qualities and properties of the animal and vegetable part of creation are the same now, as they were originally, that created by Divine wisdom to answer particular ends, the same design is still continued and brought to effect; yet in a matter of the first moment in which they are essentially concerned, they deviate from experience, and substitute hypothesis, they relinquish the invariable Laws of Creation and place Imagination on the throne of Reason.

We will not here be seduced into the same error by analyzing the manners and process of our attainments, by largely entering into the springs and operations of moral and physical causes, but confine ourselves to what we may safely aver, That man is endowed with animal and intellectual faculties, that they enable us to discover matters of moment, that the just application of them is a source of happiness, that their dignity and efficacy originate in true Religion, *That the way of Man is not in himself: it is not in Man that walketh to direct his steps.*

The mind not enlightened by a connection with divine subjects, is contracted in its powers, and satisfied with enjoyments that constitute brutal contentment: wild wandering in woods and forests, preying on animals, the glory of conquering and entrapping the denizens

denizens of the wilderness, is the high exercise of their natural rights, the brilliant display of the powers of their nature; principles merely human are confined to animal objects, the grand chain that unites man to man is broken, and selfish predilection makes them satisfied with themselves; the most ignorant nations hold others in contempt and aversion, and think their barbarous arrangements the standard of propriety and their conceptions of things the highest wisdom.

The depredations of self-will are not confined to these inhospitable regions; under the wing of Religion that teaches civilization and mutual kindness, its designs are interrupted by heterogeneous spirits, who pretending a natural right to the good things of this life, infringe all moral and social virtue, disturbing all order and harmony, call it the natural freedom of man, the inherent liberty of human nature.

Others, no less dangerous, will not admit of this fallacious reasoning, their personal safety and property are exposed by it; but from a philosophic genius, too brilliant to receive divine assistance, they rely on their own powers to form a moral system, which they aver will better govern the passions, regulate society, and restrain violence, than the laws of God.

In

In the execution of their plan we will suppose they have an eye to public and private advantage, to strengthen their objects by legal authority, to animate the passions by the desire of applause and approbation. How far these can of themselves be efficacious to order and content we will attempt to shew.

The happiness of human nature consists in the greatest attainable perfection, in the enjoyment of such things as are adapted to it:— Can the best constructed society administer to the happiness of such disposition of Nature? Society breathes nothing of perfection, its addresses to the passions are merely palliative, its strongest enforcements can only restrain, not conquer vicious propensities; the constant jarrings produced by the dissimilarity of possessions and situations, of power and weakness, of affluence and poverty, will never bring peace to the bosom, or satisfaction with the justice of temporal dispensations. The wisdom shewn in the grand arrangement of social laws, by which the vast variety of interests are united and kept from gravitating into disorder, is lost to the vulgar mind; it neither feels the glow of admiration or traces the excellence of each link that forms the chain, and concentrates the whole in harmony; his personal sensations supersede all legal wisdom and make him feel his wants—the sweat that hard labour draws from his brow will not be rendered more pleasing by the sight of others ease,

ease; or when stretched on the bed of sickness, will the physician's aid and dispensations of charity make him regardless of his wretched fate; or will the want of education hinder him from feeling the immense distance that incident has thrown him, from men of like nature with himself. It is not within the reach of the wisdom of Legislature to suppress the ideas that arise from the great dissimilarity between riches and grandeur and the tattered wretchedness of penury and want. At whatever period the assumption of rank and power, the distribution of property and aggrandizement of interest took place, it will not avail by its duration to suppress the sensations of nature and the growth of jealousy and envy; they may constitute social rights and render them valuable to the possessor; but the man destined to earn his bread by the labour of his hands, without other resource or hopes, sees not the beauty of those establishments, but, excluded from their enjoyments, feels himself injured by the exclusion.

Reasoners on social union are often erroneous in their ideas of interest, arising from natural affinity; the system built on this principle is feeble, for union cannot exist when the chain of reciprocal advantage is broken, and private interest discovers it has little or no connexion with that of the public; the various branches of society must partake of the nutriment of the body, to be sensible

of the goodness of its dispensations; to behold the blooming beauties of the vineyard, will be no reward for the labour of cultivating and keeping it in order.

With the soundest reason we admire our social laws, and glory in the wisdom of the administrators of justice, yet, as all other human institutions, they partake of imperfection, and are not so firmly united in all their parts, as to keep their objects from irregularity, discord and confusion.

We deceive ourselves if we expect to form a moral system on a union between public and private interest, and expect social laws to be efficacious on that principle; the mass of the people feel no influence from public interest, delegated power is a dispensation of which they have little conception, and from which they do not apprehend they receive any advantage; the laws they enact are adapted to protect property and guard against crimes; of property they have none to protect and self preservation will keep them from offence: those charming ramifications that flow from the laws of Nature, forming that beautiful diversity of high and low, rich and poor, are lost upon them; the shade that throws these beauties into the fairest point of view alone appears before their eyes, and makes the whole scene to them a vast expanse of gloom and darkness.

darkness. What charms can they see in an arrangement which gives to others the rich domain, the splendid palace, rank, dignity and honour, and leaves them to earn their scanty pittance by daily labour, and ruminate on the fate of their growing progeny, born and involved in wretchedness? How feeble must be the influence of a moral system that leaves the mind in such an uncomfortable and dangerous situation? Vastly different do things temporal appear, when instead of abstracting our actions from religious motives, we obey for the Lord's sake, when virtue is our principle and obedience to the will of God our motive; when we envy not the great, or repine at the lowness of our condition, because we are convinced there will be a day, when our actions will be rewarded according to their worth, when the Supreme Being will irradiate with his favour the good and righteous. On this basis morality is immovable, the fear of God, the love of goodness, the desire of pleasing the sovereign Lord of all, combine to strengthen the bands of social virtue, and uniting things temporal by the chain of things eternal, form a barrier against violence and depredation, immutable and indissoluble.

Discontent, that bane of human comfort, may be attempted to be removed, by shewing the little satisfaction there is in human things, the shortness of their duration, and too frequent destructive

effects: but will this reasoning reach the habits of those who live at ease, in affluence and honour?—Will minds oppressed by difficulties, resentful from envy and contracted circumstances, feel any consolation from these arguments, and draw comfort from the idea, that a life of wretchedness will be terminated by eternal sleep?

Supposing the dispensation of happiness is alledged to spread in a spacious field, that it is nearer upon par than is generally imagined; that labour does not produce the disgust that idleness does, that the effects of affluence are often solicitude and trouble, the consequence of luxury, antipathy and aversion to the nicest food, insensibility of the indulgence of the most comfortable dress. Can these arguments have any effect on the hungry appetite? on him who feels the bleak wind pierce his tattered garment and looks with fondness on a dry crust, the last friend his craving stomach knows to preserve existence? Subtile ideas are not adapted to his comprehension; he can have no idea of the ennui of affluence, or conceive that a situation deprived of the wants of nature, can be as desirable as that which abounds in all things that can give it animation and are marks of honour and distinction in society.

Neither moral or social influence are attainable by equality of power, it inconnects men, and causes every individual to think of
his

his personal claims; relative interest forms no connection from independent principles, public good will scarcely be cultivated when every fetid breath may clamour down distinguished excellence; the idea has been thrown out to amuse the populace; the servant could not but admire a scheme, that placed him beside his master, whilst the master derided the futility of the deception, and admiring his own wisdom, extended the philosophical notions he had long entertained, and thereby rejected all religion, broke every tie of social obligation and opened the way to those astonishing scenes of cruelty and slaughter that have followed.

The best moral system, that may be deduced from the most correct natural or experimental Philosophy, must of itself be inefficacious to general good: the more refined exercise of Reason, is but the lot of a few, and philosophical attainments are possessed by still a less number; the want of improved faculties and proper education, must exclude the multitude from understanding and perceiving the motives and justness of its principles, their penury and daily labour for subsistence must preclude a possibility of extending their mental powers, whilst their contracted circumstances draw all their attention to the miseries of their depressed state. If such is the effect of Philosophical legislation, where is the chain that keeps the mass of society in order and peace?

Knowledge

Knowledge in general may be attained at our leisure, taken up when a person is grown to full strength and has his powers in full force and vigour, but morality far different in its nature cannot be so effected; the propensities of man to evil gain ascendancy over his mind, before he has arrived at a state of understanding sufficiently strong to comprehend philosophical principles, and govern the affections, before Genius is capable of drawing the conclusions of Reason.

If philosophical and political refinements are above the comprehension of the vulgar, if principles founded on the idea of public and private interest, are not reconcileable to vulgar notions or suited to their understanding, we must look for some other source, that can produce union, content and order, some arrangement, which by its influence can reach the hearts and understandings of the multitude, that being adapted to their understanding, may establish a chain of general union, the strength and support of harmony. To effect this, Religion alone has the power, its modes of persuasion are evident and quick, at once animating the passions and instructing the mind; strong and immutable as drawn from God, manifest as the offspring of every part of creation, in affinity with the fairest powers of our nature, she drops her gentle influence on the heart and leads it to every virtue that can adorn a human being.

The

The narrations of Reason are often uninteresting and disregarded, but subjects addressed to the Imagination attach that active power, and draw attention; from visible things it collects ideas of the Creator; from their unequalled excellence and beauty, conceives the Almighty power and perfection of God, and from the regular dispensation of Divine goodness, perceives the human being to be an object of Divine care; here springs the fountain of gratitude, here the grand object of imitation is impressed on our reason, the mind thus enlarged understands the force of Divine Revelation, and man becomes possessed of those endowments that make him illustrious in the world.

A scheme to form a state on the interest which every individual has in the public good, is absurd in the extreme, and big with every production that can create disgust and disaster; the vast variety of humours that influence the conduct of mankind, will either oppress the inferior or infringe on the rights and distinctions of the superior; natural ideas of equality cannot create submission or aggrandizement of wealth, inculcate the gentleness and condescension due to inferiors and essentially necessary to social order: the superior will have no motive to consider himself as entrusted with riches and power for the public good, or restrain his application of them to his own emolument and influence; and did the submission of the people
keep

keep pace with his enlargement of wealth and influence, it would only enlarge the field of despotism and misery.

Sentiments of equality in civil society are subversive of public good, self will be the leading principle, and relative duties lost in personal interest. What a miserable society must that be which consists of stiff and stubborn spirits, that will neither bear with others infirmities and tempers, that will carry their humours into execution as far as their natural force or acquired powers will enable them, and suffer the least difference in opinion or clashing of interest to create hatred and aversion; such dispositions can be kept from violence only by compulsion, and their obedience be the result of principles the most abject and servile.

How different is the operation of those Divine precepts that God has revealed to guard us against the injuries produced by depraved nature! To keep the powers of man in their proper state and situation, they deduce no aid from secular power, they counteract no violence by the arts of intrigue, they seduce none into obedience by addressing a prevailing passion, they penetrate into the deepest recesses of the heart, by animating the affections to pursue the finest feelings of nature, by brotherly kindness, by gentleness, humility and condescension: they teach us, Rom. xv. 1. *To bear the infirmities*

infirmities of the weak; 1st Thess. v. 14. To warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men; 1st Pet. ii. 13. 14. 15. To submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well: for so is the will of God, that with well doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. These instructions enter deeper into the philosophy of nature, than the most refined systems of political morality; in the practice of them, our dispositions can admit of none of that malevolence which obstructs the performance of relative duties, that arrogance which debars condescension, so amiable in superiors, that self-will and impatience of command, so subversive of peace and order in inferiors. A degree of virtue unknown to political morality must be attained, before a person will sacrifice private emolument to the good of others, where no reciprocal returns of good offices are pre-supposed; and higher motives than compulsive laws must operate, to enforce duties which humanity claims: the wisest and best executed laws cannot reach all the infirmities and regulate all the dispositions of nature, but these must be influenced or society will be no more than a confused and disjointed structure. Our natural rights to life and perception are protected by political wisdom from self-evident motives, but its power extends not beyond

the person, it cannot influence the affections, it cannot induce any one to endanger his being, to save the life of a neighbour; the interest an individual has in the public, will not incite him to dispense his property, to preserve the life of another perishing through want; the natural faculty of speech, so eminently deserving public attention, as the grand instrument of social intercourse, the means of conveying thoughts, sentiments and opinions, cannot by political morality in any degree be kept within the bounds of verity and truth; the best regulated governments have found it indispensibly necessary to seek the aid of higher influence; and by penal laws have restrained this depravity; but the evil lies too deep in nature to be suppressed by external regulations; the whisper, the secret insinuation that poisons the mind and wounds the tenderest feelings of the heart, can be stopped by religious considerations only; these suppress every propensity to blast reputation, the dearest right of a rational creature, the star that adorns him in society, the pillar of credit and confidence; political morality aims not to secure honest fame, but exerts itself to reduce a character too fair to remain in obscurity, too brilliant to be excluded the circle of power. Indeed all the operations of ability merely human prove, that so far from ascertaining rectitude in social intercourse, or securing to individuals their lives, fame or property, that it cannot suppress the vices that destroy every thing that is amiable in the civil and moral world.

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The powers which the mind receives from their sublime connexion, draw us out of this depth of misery, by regulations adapted to every capacity, addressed to internal sensations: Mat. vii. 12. *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*; Mat. x. 16. *Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*; 2d Cor. i. 12. *Have your conversation honest*; Col. iii. 9. *Lie not one to another*; 1st Thes. iv. 6. *That no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter*. These precepts soften the asperity of natural dispositions, render them superior to fraud and deception, and direct their intercourse with mankind, as with brethren engaged in one cause conducive to temporal and eternal happiness.

Thus governed by Divine influence, protected by laws that equally embrace the greatest and lowest members of the state, we may justly boast that we live under the shield of heaven, and the protection of laws that are the noblest efforts of human wisdom, giving us every incitement that Divine goodness and Reason can produce, to make the good subject, the tender father, the dutiful son, and faithful friend: we have every motive to stir up in our hearts that zeal and magnanimity, which will not suffer God to be blasphemed, or the sacred rights of society to be infringed, by the madness of modern philosophy or ambition of discontented men.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c.

AT THE ASSIZE,

HELD

At HUNTINGDON,

BEFORE

THE RIGHT HON. SIR ARCHIBALD MACDONALD,

LORD CHIEF BARON,

And SIR BEAUMONT HOTHAM,

One of the Barons of the Court of Exchequer,

JULY 22, 1798,

THIS SERMON

WAS PREACHED,

By GEORGE LAUGHTON, D. D.

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE PEACE, AND VICAR OF
CHIPPENHAM, CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

At the Assize

held

at Huntingdon

before

The Right Hon. Sir Archibald Macdonald

Lord Chief Baron

and Sir Beaumont Newhall

one of the Justices of the Peace

for the County of Huntingdon

THIS SERMON

was preached

By GEORGE LAUGHTON, D.D.

one of the Justices of the Peace, and Vicar of

St. Andrew's Church, Huntingdon

[82]

Job XI.—12.

VAIN MAN WOULD BE WISE.

IN examining the state of our natural constitution, we shall discover numerous reasons to ascertain the folly of man's presumption. Human infirmity must ever fall short of rectitude; animal powers are not only feeble in themselves, but communicate a considerable degree of their weakness to the mind, they indulge that variety of crimes, which spring in the latent corners of the heart, are the bane of every domestic comfort, subversive of public peace and order, render abortive the regulations of civil power and loosen those bands that unite society, yet *vain man would be wise*.

Besides secret vices, against which political laws and civil institutions cannot fully operate, the affections and passions have a reprehensible propensity that the Legislature cannot reach; the power we have of acting, the natural right of directing our affections and exercising our will, are bars to the operation of laws; we insist that

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it would be unjust to break into the circle of our natural rights, yet no one will be so absurd as to approve of an improper use of them; sound judgement looks with abhorrence on despotic parental rigour, filial ingratitude, perfidy in friendship, malevolent whispers, that destroy domestic happiness, hints and insinuations injurious to reputation, the variety of arts used by ambition, turbulence and intolerance clothed in the dress of zeal, with all the subordinate means to create jealousy and disunion; these wretched ebullitions of feeble nature, too darkly veiled and secluded from the arm of civil power, escape the grasp of penal laws; and probably it is not to be desired that they should penetrate so deep, as an endeavour to reach secret vices, too nice a scrutiny of actions, may degenerate into tyranny; Conscience guided by superior influence, will less erroneously and more effectually correct and rectify them.

This power is more penetrating and extensive than penal laws, and from its coercive and sublime nature, merits particular attention and regard; its principle is firm and permanent, its object just and immutable, and its cultivation essentially necessary. Innovations in vice avoid the temporal address of law, they vary their appearance and complexion with the prevailing taste; those which formerly were thought trivial and inoffensive are now disgusting and held in abhorrence; and manners that are now the criterion of politeness, may,

may, in a future day, be thought rustic and barbarous: when Conscience, that dictate of the understanding power in moral actions, derived from the knowledge of the purest laws, presides over our conduct, vices can have no existence, because it regulates our behaviour by the truths revealed of God; should infirmity for a moment draw us from the line of rectitude, the secret reproach of violated truth and purity will draw forth the blush of shame, and the delicacy of its honour discovers the injury it suffers by visible sensations.

Human laws do not necessarily produce this dictate of the understanding power or constitute morality; they enjoin duties simple in their nature, but like rough materials do not closely join together, they leave vacancies defective in beauty, as well as in their design: Man, by nature complex, and in his affinity with those of the same nature, so various and diversified, cannot be reached in his several parts, by the simple power of Legislature, and did not the idea of God arrange the internal disposition of the heart, the morality of civil law would greatly dissatisfy a sound understanding, although not selected from particular periods when either despotism or ignorance predominated; we know that in times enlightened by solid Philosophy and the pursuits of truth and justice, men have erred even against the laws of Nature. Can it be approved by the

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Philosophy

Philosophy of Nature, that a slave's killing a freeman in his own defence, should be treated as a parricide?* Can it be justified that a man should be condemned without confronting his accusers?† Is it not an infringement on natural modesty to compel a woman to criminate herself for violating her chastity, before marriage? Is it agreeable to the delicacy of social refinement, and natural sensations, to cause a woman to appear before a Magistrate and swear to the author of her infamy? Was it consistent with the rights of Nature to condemn a woman to death, who lost her child, without having discovered her pregnancy to the magistrate?‡ These have been points of legislation approved of in their day. Moreover it is not the natural faculty of Reason immediately to discern why the most just revenge is prohibited; why we may not oppose tyranny and oppression, with force and violence; or why the magistrate violates natural ideas, to hinder individuals from being judges in their own cause: yet the wisdom of these measures is proved from political necessity: strong natural attachment to self, influences the affections, and seduces the understanding from the line of just judgement; and the eye of the law looking with tenderness on humanity is always indulgent to error and mistake, and will not severely criminate from considerations very complicated and deduced

* Plato de legibus lib. 9. † Hen viii. ‡ Hen. ii.

from obscure principles. So that on this basis alone, a clear and distinct system of morality cannot be erected.

Whilst we pay the tribute of the highest admiration to the influence of religious principles on social arrangements, we must not lose sight of the great wisdom, the brilliant efforts and effects of human genius in the formation and establishment of laws, and discriminate their several modes and extent of operation. Divine and human laws differ in their origin and object; legislative wisdom never decides by Divine laws, what should be determined by human, or by human laws, what should be adjudged by Divine. Human laws differ in their nature from those of Religion, they are subject to all the changes of accident and inclination, and from their mutability vary their nature, require new measures to ascertain the desired good. But the laws of God, founded on immutable principles, are always good and cannot be improved.

Laws dependent on the will of one individual would be violated or annulled by every breath of whim, or caprice; all the infirmities of humanity would combine to make them oppressive and injurious. But when laws are enjoined and supported by a perfect and immutable Being, these depravities cannot arise and society must receive all the strength and stability they are instituted to

convey. The influence of Religion is drawn from the decisions of Reason, that of human law from its operation on the passions: not one simple position, but many collateral and circumstantial considerations are often adduced to render an action criminal in the eye of the law: On a basis so complex we cannot establish a moral system sufficiently clear and perspicuous to every understanding.

The insufficiency of human laws to enforce duties submitted to their determination, without the aid of Religion, will not be less in respect to actions, that arise from thought. Advocates for political morality may urge, that all which is necessary to establish public order, is to take care that criminals do not escape the rod of justice; was that the case, the wise laws by which we are governed, and their excellent and unblemished interpreters, would not encounter the abundant obstacles that obtrude upon their wisdom and call for their continual vigilance and attention. A defect in moral principles, admits illicit gratification, and depredation; from Religion we draw those sentiments that meliorate our dispositions and suppress those passions that are fatal to the peace of society: did it not, a few criminals would not be brought to the bar, the lowest and most illiterate only would not await the awful sentence, but men of more importance would disturb the public peace; Ambition and Jealousy would occasion perpetual depredations, skill and ingenuity would

would evade justice, art and falsehood be too subtle for civil institutions, and involve the state in discord and confusion.

Educated in christian principles men are more easily drawn back from error, and reduced to order: were these principles not inculcated, and in their stead political morality made the rudiment and superstructure of education; new modes of government and new obligations must be formed, and we should find oppression possessed of the place of the gentle influence of Religion; and implicit obedience, the worst species of despotic servitude, would trample on all civil and religious liberty.

The operation of Religion on our nature, is far more congenial to its genius and temper, than the force of penal laws: natural equality which man feels, gives him ideas that make him bear reluctantly the exercise of power; the hand that inflicts punishment he considers is flesh and blood, the tongue which pronounces his condemnation is that of fallible man: these natural sensations lose their malevolence, through the balmy influence of Religion; Conscience arraigns him before the tribunal of God, his pride is humbled to the dust before the grand Sovereign of Nature, and obedience is paid to the magistracy as dispensers of justice, conformable to the Divine will.

The feelings of Nature under affliction find no alleviation from political morality; an assurance of Divine mercy and goodness fills the breast with comfort; robbed of the sublime consolation we draw from Divine favour and protection, there is nothing left us, but a barrenness of mind, a wretchedness of being, governed by selfish views, forced to prostrate ourselves before the powers in being and flatter the basest of potent Lords; conscious excellence and animating sensation of worth, will be no longer valuable, no motive can exist for aspiring to honourable distinction. Fawning and sycophancy, with every art to attain power, be it ever so base or bloody, will be thought ingenious, respectable, the result of wisdom.

Actions regulated by the Divine will, maintain their excellence in times of the worst complexion, under every temporal disadvantage, and mortifying circumstance; by that regulation men never lose sight of their natural dignity, are obedient without meanness, magnanimous without arrogance and elevated without haughtiness, always bearing in mind the grand principle, which gave them these qualities.

Political maxims confined to temporal designs, cannot merit the approbation of a sound understanding in any degree proportionate to religious principles, which in all their operations promote
temporal

temporal blessings, and lead on their objects to eternal happiness. We do not find the most gentle application of penal law, to address the feelings of human nature, with the tenderness that the Gospel does; we see no effects from the philosophy of the Great Nation, but actions that would disgrace the most savage people; Benevolence, Compassion and Mercy, are in their creed the meanest traits of weakness, unworthy the towering genius of an enlightened nation. Individual peace and tranquility can have no relation to these principles; it is more consistent with right reason to prevent, rather than to punish crimes; to reject all religious influence, and yet punish what nature must inevitably produce, is to legislate without reference to the mind or body.

In the obscure ages before Greece or Rome made a figure on the scale of society, we read of altars, temples, and oracles; natural powers discovered the necessity they were under of seeking aid superior to human endowments; Reason, on the stretch to grasp a ray of supernatural intelligence, inevitably erred, and their ideas of supreme beings were commensurate to the powers of their understanding; their Gods were stained with mortal impurities; their mental conceptions illiberal and contracted, could not bear the splendour of excellence, it embarrassed their understandings and created jealousy, a brilliant character was rewarded with the sentence
of

of Ostracism, and the brighter designs of genius could not be carried into effect without the Delphic fiat. Example and precept had little effect on their minds; Numa Pompilius, eminently distinguished for his virtues, could not keep the people in order without pretending to have an immediate intercourse with the Gods. Simple positions are best adapted to the people, they are incapable of philosophizing. None of the Grecian or Roman legislators considered them as capable of conceiving abstract ideas: In committing their authority to persons worthy of trust, they were determined by incidents to which they could not be strangers, by facts obvious to the senses. The voice that proclaimed the prowess and crowned the victor's brow, announced the person to command; a character distinguished by his justice, diligence and integrity, directed them in the choice of a Prætor. These points are obvious to the senses; but to conduct intricate affairs, in which a knowledge of the operations of the human heart, and certain effects of particular causes, is necessary, to discern the critical moment of action, combine the force of various powers, and apply the union to advantage, greatly surpasses their abilities.

The Roman people reserved to themselves a right to appoint plebeians to public offices, but seldom ventured to exercise that power; at Athens the magistrates were allowed by the Law of
Aristides

Aristides to be elected from all the different classes of inhabitants, yet there never was a case, says Xenophon (pages 691, 692) that the common people petitioned for employments which could endanger either their security or their glory. The ability to chuse, or to be chosen, are widely different; should the government of a state be vested in individuals indiscriminately, their ignorance must inevitably bring it to ruin, and if there is a necessity to entrust it to men of education, talents and ability, it must be to an Aristocracy; extensive faculties and brilliancy of genius elevate in the scale of society, natural endowments and acquired excellencies exercised in the protection and service of the state are far more noble than the most illustrious hereditary honours.

The difficulties attending a change of government are infinite; to proceed by violent measures destroys its strength, creates disgust and abhorrence; radical principles must be removed; these impressed in childhood, elucidated by education and endeared by habit, form domestic arrangements and extend to the community; the more the mind is enlarged, the farther it is removed from political alchymy; the deeper we are versed in arts and sciences and the aggrandizement of riches, the more averse shall we be to have them destroyed, and the greater need have we of an influence that can reach the inward recesses of the heart and govern the affections;

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that

that the infinite desires which spring from wealth and voluptuousness may not delude the understanding.

To carry back a mature community to primitive simplicity is impossible; the knowledge of refinements cannot be obliterated; the wisdom that the visible world and Divine Revelation have poured on the mind, cannot be effaced; the consciousness of a power superior to ourselves, will have its effect in civil society. Could the ideas produced in our minds by the Gospel Revelation be eradicated from them, the effect would be, not a restoration of primitive simplicity, but anarchy and an entire dissolution of society.

The inability of human reason to establish a wise system of morality is evident, yet could Legislature institute laws sufficiently forcible to guard against open violence, that cogency could never inculcate the principles of benevolence that Religion does, and repair the vast rent society would suffer without it. The strictest attention to justice would be of little moment to those who are so necessitous, that a small misfortune would make them wretched; nevertheless this is the utmost stretch of Reason; the only beam to enlighten this gloomy scene, flows from a spirit of resignation to the will of God; a spirit that gives animation to Virtue, supports the warm glow of Charity, administers the balm of comfort to reflection,

reflection, and plants peace in the bosom oppressed by the hand of misery. A power, gentle as the finest feelings of nature, delicate as sensibility, extensive as reason and understanding, that as the electric fire unfolds the beauties of creation, expands the powers of man to every excellence that adorns society and gives grace to virtue.

To merit the respect of society is a desire congenial to a liberal mind, and the source of great public utility; it makes us attentive to our relative duties, and cautious not to violate the harmony of spiritual and temporal connexion, the firmest band of union: this cannot be effected by temporal interest alone; this chief link of political morality is defective in principle, mutable, liable to exceptions, and different constructions, and of course has no fixed foundation for relative duties; wise and permanent regulations of good government cannot be formed on changeable and fluctuating principles, even laws enacted for temporary purposes must be on the constitutional basis; was not the grand combination of laws that govern a great empire to spring from one firm and inviolable principle, their disjunction would bring it to ruin.

The arguments that a nice sense of honour, the desire of fame, respect and esteem, are sufficiently cogent to unite society and enforce
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the view of morality, have due weight, but to suppose they can exist without a Divine motive, is fallacious; temporal systems cannot produce them, they must have an origin in excellence; mere animal propensities are not congenial to them; the applause of man is liable to caprice, the brightest object of their admiration may suddenly incur their dislike and aversion; allied to perfection, in affinity with the soul, they spring from thoughts suited to a nature that glories in things noble, excellent and sublime; *they descend from above, says that excellent fragment (the Somnium Scipionis) are protected by the Gods, and are conducive to a seat in heaven.*

What an elevation of thought this for a mind unenlightened by Revelation! yet it could not enter within the veil; it was left to Christianity to unfold the most refined philosophy of Nature, enter into the recess of the heart, unite communities in bonds of love and amity, become the vital spring of all relative duties, of domestic comfort, the sacred parent of every virtue, the golden line that leads to the sublimest views the soul of man can aspire to, and launches the mind into the regions of the blessed. Here, with all the light that is spread before us, Reason feels its limits; fettered by its union with matter, the soul cannot be fully indulged in her longings after immortality. He who never erred has told us, that they who follow righteousness shall be clothed in perfection, become pure as

God

God is pure, and be surrounded with all the glories of heaven. Are we thus assuredly under the Divine protection? what but ourselves can separate us from it? We know not the ways of Providence, it is not with us to judge of the works of the God of wisdom and goodness.

The mind dazzled by the progress of arms, the splendid victories of a people who have embued their hands in the most sacred blood, whose savage barbarity has exceeded all that was ever known, and, staggered by these enormities, is at a loss to reconcile their success with the goodness of Divine Providence; the least reflection will not permit us to attribute to a Divine cause, the effect of human depravity. Long before this destructive lava burst forth to destroy the human race, Infidelity had widely spread in France, Atheism was entertained in the first circles, and considered as a proof of a philosophic genius. The grand basis on which society stands, thus removed, yielded to commotion and suffered total dissolution; in the Austrian Netherlands the imperial power tottered, a spirit of discontent had prepared the way for the spoiler; in Holland the violence of faction had long weakened the sinews of Government, the remains of the feudal system had greatly alienated their Germans from their Princes. The various states of Italy, sunk in debaucheries disgraceful to human nature, were lost to mental energy,

energy, and become too pusillanimous to support the dignity of man in the field of honour. Thus a neglect of Divine protection, inattention to social virtue, and restless dissatisfaction, opened the gate to depredation, and too late taught those victims of folly, the horrors attendant on submitting to voracious and insatiable tyranny.

When men disregard God, God will undoubtedly desert them; when they dissolve the principles that bind society together, society must fall to pieces. These momentous truths should caution us against irreligion and disunion, and make us feel the value of our constitution; by which every one enjoys the fruit of his own vine and his own fig tree, by which there is not an infant born that is not a child of the state, the adopted of power, under the guardianship of the Legislature, by which the meanest subject is as securely protected as the greatest lord, by which the King, Lords and Commons join hand in hand to discountenance vice, repel injury and diffuse comfort. In defence of this grand union of nature, Religion and social interest, we can have but one mind and one heart; the compact of British honour, that crowns the individual not with leaves of oak or laurel, or with the civic crown steeped in blood, but with the glory of defending innocence and virtue, with the renown of protecting every thing that is sacred and dear to man, of supporting the cause of God, and aspiring with humble confidence in Divine mercy, to immortal glory hereafter. 5 0059



